

Social Justice Leadership in Scottish Education

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ABSTRACT

Leadership has been identified in contemporary policy as a critical factor in taking forward school improvement and enhancing outcomes for pupils (Pontz, Nusche and Moorman, 2008) in many educational systems including Scottish education. A second policy driver in Scottish education currently is focused on 'closing the gap' (Scottish Government, 2016) between the attainment of pupils from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds and this is measured largely in terms of assessment outcomes and post school destinations. However, there is a danger that such drivers become reductive and as a result the focus narrows to attainment statistics, causing social factors which militate against pupil achievement to be overlooked. In a context where school populations are becoming more diverse there is a question then about how headteachers maintain a more critical focus on the attainment and achievement of these diverse groups of learners. This article explores the concept of 'social justice leadership' which has emerged in the literature in recent years to characterise the work of school leaders looking to enhance the learning outcomes for all learners in a school. The article draws from the case studies conducted in Scotland as part of the International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN) research project on social justice leadership to explore this concept in a Scottish setting. As part of this study a framework was generated to track three levels of educational decision-making was generated encompassing the macro, meso and micro levels. This article uses the ISLDN framework to explore some of the enabling factors for headteachers in their practice as social justice leaders and some of the hindering factors that they grapple with.

Key words: social justice leadership, school leadership and social justice, leadership and equality, social justice leadership and Scottish education

INTRODUCTION: EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN SCOTLAND

Social justice has been part of the discourse of the Scottish Parliament since its inception in 1999 with one of the first policy programmes, *Social Justice: A Scotland Where Everyone Matters* (Scottish Executive, 1999) launched by the founding First Minister, Donald Dewar. This was a broad based programme which included economic growth, social development, community building and education. Ideas of social justice are now firmly rooted in the teaching profession

with an explicit statement in the professional standards for teaching and for leadership (GTCS 2012a, b) of social justice as a core professional value. However, a gap between the attainment of those from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds has endured despite the various strategies deployed over successive administrations. The focus on this issue of an attainment gap has been maintained by the current administration, forming a central element of the *National Improvement Framework*, (Scottish Government, 2016, 2017a) and specifically, the *Scottish Attainment Challenge* (Scottish Government, 2014).

As a second key theme in policy discourse Scotland has followed other countries in making school leadership a policy priority in the national improvement agenda, citing a common position evident across OECD policy: “Evidence shows that the quality of teaching and school leadership are the most important in-school factors in a child’s outcomes” (Scottish Government, 2017b: 9). A particular focus is to raise attainment particularly of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (Scottish Government, 2016). Thus, in the recent consultation document on governance in education, *Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to Achieve Excellence and Equity in Education: A Governance Review* (Scottish Government, 2017: 10) it is stated that: “Empowering our teachers and headteachers is key to delivering our vision of excellence and equity”. Part of the vision for school leadership is articulated as building greater autonomy: “We are committed to extending to schools, responsibilities that currently sit with local authorities and to allocating more resources directly to headteachers to enable them to take decisions, based on local circumstances, to give all our children and young people the best chance of success” (p.10). At the same time the intention is to hold headteachers, schools and teachers to greater account “for their actions” (p.10).

Holding headteachers to account is not new but rather can be seen as a continuous imperative in Scottish education policy. In the development of the *Curriculum for Excellence*, the construct of ‘intelligent accountabilities’ was used to propose greater scope for headteachers and schools (Scottish Executive, 2004) to determine curriculum provision. However, the balance between autonomy and accountability is a contested process. In the recent consultation on governance, accountability to parents and the local community is highlighted as the most important aspect. This reflects the expectations with the *Standard for Headship* (GTCS, 2012b), in which the key purpose of headship is to work with the school and its wider community to create the conditions for effective learning for all learners. Within the bureaucratic structures of a national education system, there are multiple agencies who hold headteachers to account for different dimensions of their role whether this be, for example, national and local government, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education (HMIe), the General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCS). Indeed, Macbeath *et al.* (2009), in their study on the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Scotland, found that headteachers must manage and respond to multiple and sometimes competing accountabilities. The current intense political focus on social justice alongside the avowed intention to change governance arrangements will give headteachers greater responsibilities to lead schools to develop approaches to tackle issues related to the gap between outcomes achieved by advantaged and disadvantaged learners.

Given the multiple and sometimes competing accountabilities placed on headteachers, there is a danger that issues of social justice become focused largely on attainment and that other wider concerns which are creating barriers to learning for specific groups of learners are overlooked. There is a question about how headteachers can work to ameliorate some of the significant barriers faced by children and young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or from other minority and marginalised groups especially in an educational system where there is increasing diversity in school populations. Forde and Torrance (2016) note that for headteachers, engagement in the learning of pupils and making a difference to young people's lives lies at the heart of their motivation and what they see as the rewards of their role. However, the scope to lead learning is often limited by the daily managerial demands made on headteachers.

In this article, we explore the concept of 'social justice leadership' to characterise the work of headteachers seeking to improve learning outcomes for all learners. We draw from the International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN) research project to chart out the ways in which social justice leadership is being investigated. We then look to four case studies of Scottish headteachers to identify those factors that facilitate or hinder their work in reducing barriers to learning experienced by different disadvantaged and marginalised groups of learners.

THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

Gewirtz (1998) argues that the concept of 'social justice' in studies of educational policy in the UK is under-theorized in research. Since then there has been a significant focus on social justice in education including on the role of headteachers (English, 2008; Theoharris, 2010; Forde and Torrance, 2016). However, the concept of social justice remains contested and, as Bogotch (2015) argues, part of the issue comes from the several meanings of the concept further intensified by the deeply contextualised nature of these conceptual understandings. Gewirtz appraises two important discussions of social justice: firstly, as redistribution proposed by Rawls (1972) and secondly, as representation proposed by Fraser (1997). The idea of social justice as redistribution within an educational context would relate to the redistribution of resources including the expertise of practitioners, school facilities and other educational supports to remove barriers to learning experienced by marginalised and minority groups. The idea of social justice as representation within an educational setting relates to the importance of the curriculum and pedagogy recognising the pluralistic nature of our society and ensuring different cultures, faiths, lifestyles are represented in pedagogies and curricular materials.

Gewirtz (1998), however, argues that these two constructions only take us so far and proposes Young's (1990) conceptualisation of the 'five faces of oppression': exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence' (p.469-470). This helps us to understand the multiple and subtle ways in which diverse groups of learners are marginalised. An example of this subtle form of marginalisation is to be found in Liasidou and Antoniou's (2015) report on the 'perceptions' of headteachers who had been charged with taking forward inclusive education policies. These headteachers put the lack of progress on the part of disadvantaged pupils down to the pupils not making the most of what the school

had to offer rather than looking more closely at barriers to learning. This scenario highlights not just the importance of leadership in ensuring provision of opportunities, the actions taken to build the conditions for learning but also in the improved outcomes for all learners. Bogotch (2014) argues that 'the legitimacy of social justice as an educational construct lies in making tangible differences in other people's lives, not in how we as educators, practice education' (p.53). Therefore, social justice leadership is not simply about enacting policy but something much deeper. As such, social justice leadership is a critically transformative process (Shields, 2014). 'Social justice leadership' is inherently political, making deliberate interventions to address in different ways the five faces of oppression identified by Young (1990). Most particularly social justice leadership is about achieving outcomes that will make a difference for groups of learners and individuals who are currently marginalized. There is a question then about what facilitates or hinders social justice leadership in bringing about transformative change to improve the opportunities and outcomes for diverse groups of learners.

THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NETWORK: SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP COLLABORATION

The International School Leadership Development Network (ISLDN), established in 2010 for researchers and practitioners, is an international collaboration between the British Educational Leadership and Management Association (BELMAS) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) in the USA. Currently there are two strands being investigated firstly, leadership in high needs schools and secondly, social justice leadership. This article examines the Scottish contribution to the second strand, that of social justice leadership. The focus for this strand is the investigation of the nature of social justice leadership in different educational contexts. This focus is being investigated in over 20 countries including economically developed countries, developing economies, large and small education systems. To help frame the project and to allow comparisons, a framework was generated to track social justice leadership within an educational system. This framework consists of the 'macro' (national or system level), meso (the local or community level) and micro (the school level and the practice of the school leader).

Four key research questions were generated to shape the social justice strand:

- How do social justice leaders make sense of 'social justice'?
- What do social justice leaders do?
- What factors help and hinder the work of social justice leaders?
- How did social justice leaders learn to become social justice leaders?

Data has been gathered using a common research protocol and methods which included policy analyses and in-depth interviews with headteachers and school profiling. This article reports on findings for the four case studies conducted in Scotland and looks particularly at the third research question: what factors help and hinder the work of social justice leaders?

THE SCOTTISH CASE STUDIES

The four case studies were conducted in different locations in Scotland and include two primary and two secondary schools. The two secondary schools are in city authorities, while the two primary schools are in authorities with a mix of rural and urban, the schools themselves located in small towns.

TABLE 1: CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

Case Study	Headteacher	Details
1.	Morag	Rural infant school set in mixed socio-economic community Approximately 380 pupils
2.	Hamish	Urban secondary school set in mixed socio-economic community Approximately 620 pupils
3.	Sarah	Small town primary school serving the older less affluent areas of the town Approximately 1150 pupils
4.	Ellen	Urban secondary serving a mixed socio-economic community Approximately 385 pupils

In terms of ethnicity, the profile of all schools was predominantly white British/Scottish though the city schools had a bigger representation of young people from minority ethnicities. All schools had newly arrived young people from different parts of the world. Further, each school had children with additional support needs, with one of the primary schools having a dedicated unit for children with autism and a nurture unit. The four case study headteachers had different levels of experience, for one headteacher this was their fourth headship, another their second headship while for the other two headteachers this was their first. Of these, one headteacher was relatively recently appointed with nearly two years in post, the others had over ten years experience of leading a school.

SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP: FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS

The focus of this analysis of data relates to the third research question in the ISLDN research study on social justice leadership which seeks to identify what factors facilitate or hinder the work of social justice leaders. As we will see in the analysis, it is important not to perceive these as discrete sets of factors where we can build on specific facilitating processes and eliminate the hindering factors. There is a more complex nexus of ideas, relationships and practices which, in specific contexts can be utilised by social justice leaders to advocate for change but these same factors may well prove to be obstacles in other contexts – not necessarily in a different school but at a different time. Further, when we look to what facilitates and hinders the work of social justice leadership, we need to explore this in three broad arenas within an educational system: macro, meso and micro and how factors within one level may interact with factors and issues in the other levels. Thus, policy and legislation, for example, while developed at a

national level for the system, will influence policy and practice through the meso and micro levels and beyond this into the practice of individual teachers in classrooms.

Each of the interviews was transcribed and analysed using the four research questions as a framework. This analysis then contributed to the development of a case study which used both interview data and information on the school. For this discussion on facilitating and hindering factors, these case studies were coded from which several themes were identified within each level. We turn now to these themes.

MACRO LEVEL FACTORS

A range of factors was highlighted by the headteachers at macro level, which were important in enabling them to take forward work on ensuring outcomes for all pupils. There were also several hindering factors.

TABLE 2: THEMES AT MACRO LEVEL - FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS.

Facilitating Factors	Hindering Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National policy Changing expectations of the practice of teachers National government priorities Legislation Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and local initiatives ‘going in waves’ Narrowing perspective of QA processes Cultural and parental views of ‘good and bad kids’

The macro level facilitating factors related to different facets of policy and legislation: what Hamish described as “*the messages from on high, the big messages from government, the big messages from local government, the stuff in the Standards, what schools spend their money on in terms of what Local Authorities spend their money on in terms of training staff*”. The headteachers drew from legislation and policy that supported their perspective and they screened those documents and interpreted them for their school communities through the lens of social justice leadership. Accordingly, policy and legislation provided an endorsed rationale and leverage for change. Hamish noted that: “*The policy situation in Scotland, the high level messages, the Standards, the priorities at Local Authority level, the big reports like ‘Teaching Scotland’s Future’, Professional Update – all of that. And of course, things like the institutions - the EIS - are all inclusive in nature as well so, it would be quite difficult not to be socially just.*”

National policy legitimated the headteachers’ interest in social justice and made this interest more mainstream. When social justice and equality formed a key policy theme they could revisit that theme with their staff through a legitimised policy lens to review practice and address policy priorities including self-evaluating the practice of social justice and identifying next steps for improving such practice. Morag explained that when social justice is regarded as a national priority, she feels supported in pushing the boundaries of established practice and challenging

social injustice: *"They make it more than it's just my thing. ... it's out there, the Scottish Government think that it's important and you need to be knowing about it because actually, it's now your professional responsibility to know about it and to engage in it. So, for me, that just gives you the mandate. It gives you the credibility"*. More recently as social justice has become a key policy theme, these headteachers' longstanding leadership commitment to social justice issues reflects the current orthodoxy of good practice. Looking back on their careers when social justice and equality were not considered key policy imperatives, they saw themselves and some were perceived by others as mavericks.

For these headteachers the commitment to social justice is part of their core identity as individuals and as leaders. They have throughout their careers built on the various formulations of policy around issues of equality and diversity: equal opportunities, tackling poverty to inclusive education. Ellen reflected that: *"when I started teaching the emphasis was beginning to be on inclusion whereas now it's inclusion but it's also about equity and equity means that everyone doesn't need the same because some people need a bigger step up to get them to the starting blocks"*. Particularly in the years before the policy focus on social justice, the headteachers found alternative sources to legitimise their sense of agency and provide support and 'nourishment' for what was perceived by many as an alternative perspective. Morag built networks drawing from expertise across different dimensions of social justice such as with a centre for race equality. Ellen and Sarah highlighted the importance of nationally based professional learning in supporting their work as headteachers. For Ellen, this started with the Scottish Qualification for Headship, a national preparation programme where participants reflected in depth on their values and this development continued more recently in a year long national programme for serving headteachers where issues of disadvantage and poverty were explored, helping to confirm their stance. For Ellen, the meeting of fellow headteachers both nationally and internationally was an important facilitating factor. Sarah, through this national development programme, also had the opportunity to look at inclusive education practice in other educational systems *"it was just mind bending"*. This had a profound effect, supporting Sarah's leadership particularly in confirming the stance she and the school have adopted: *"I met all kinds of people who validated the thinking we have in this school here in lots of different directions"*.

Specific elements of teacher policy were also regarded as facilitating factors. Both Sarah and Morag viewed the professional standards (GTCS, 2012a, b) as being very useful in setting the expectations placed on all teachers including the fostering of a professional disposition to support social justice. As Morag explained: *"The fact that it's in the Standards does give you that mandate. It means people need to know and they want to know because they need to know because of Professional Update... so it's exercising people"*. Hamish also pointed to the importance of social justice in initial teacher education which has resulted in greater awareness on the part of entrants to the profession. He looked for a tipping point where the critical mass of teachers would be attuned to issues related to social justice and equality.

The headteachers also identified some macro level factors which hindered their work as social justice leaders. Hamish pointed to the focus on issues of poverty and disadvantage in national policy resulting in other issues such as gender not

having a sufficient emphasis. Sarah also pointed to the barriers posed by national policy frameworks in the task of fostering equality and inclusion. She discussed the ways in which the original intentions of the Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004) could provide the means for addressing the learning needs of all learners: *“As never before we are preparing children for what we don’t know exist ...they have to be able to interact with people and situations, they have to be able to problem solve around people and situations and they have to have social and emotional resilience to cope with constant change ... and for that we need a skills based curriculum.* However, these aspirations have not been met: *“For me that’s what Curriculum for Excellence set out to do and it’s been hijacked a few times along the way”.* Ellen also raised concerns about the current increasingly centralised trend in national policy development and the focus on attainment targets: *“I personally don’t think you can have improvement year on year. I think every year you have a different cohort of young people with different strengths and challenges and you work to get the best you can get out of that groups”.* This is, as Ellen noted, not just an issue for the secondary sector but rather, a trend across education: *“I worry about the re-introduction of testing in the primaries and it will inevitably become a league table unless they can develop a more sophisticated way of looking at it”.*

Morag indicated that when the quality assurance framework for inspections, *How Good is Our School* (HMIE, 2006) had clear equality performance indicators, this helped focus work in school. However, the wider concern for issues of equality and learning had narrowed to a concern for *“technical issues”* related to the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment rather than a more holistic view of the school with aspects such as care, welfare and the development of children, the relationships in the school and between the school and its community. For Hamish, this more holistic view was also vital. He highlighted the way in which cultural and parental views of *“good and bad kids”* can create tensions: that there is *“a notion within our culture of there being good kids and bad kids. And if we can just protect the good kids from the bad kids, everything will be OK... This notion is really really unhelpful”.* Current expectations around ensuring young people are not excluded but remain in school is helping to drive change: *“So, ten years ago, kids were out and it was their fault. Where we are now, is kids are out but we all try to get them back in and everyone is thinking about how do we create the conditions that maximise the success of every single person in your classroom. And I think that’s a massive leap forward, I really do”.*

These examples illustrate a range of macro level factors related to policy and legislation that can use particularly as leverage for change. However, they also illustrate that headteachers have to ameliorate the narrowing of focus and who remain with a more holistic stance when policy priorities change or where social justice is driven by a performativity agenda. What is evident across all the case studies is that at the macro level policy, guidelines and legislation can act as useful tools. However, it is the headteachers’ purposeful use of these tools that makes the difference, supporting them as they challenge attitudes and practice at the meso and micro levels, whether that be the practice of employers, peers or colleagues, for whom they have line management responsibility as well as parents

and pupils. The importance of strategies at a national level to enable experienced headteachers to build networks to sustain their practice and understandings was highlighted as important change strategies.

MESO LEVEL FACTORS

The short term nature of current national policy, where funding is provided for a task over a limited period was an issue as Sarah highlighted: *“I don’t think that translates well into good educational policy that actually makes a difference to families”*. And it is this process of ‘translation’ between levels that is critical: where the relationship between national expectations at the macro level and local authority priorities at the meso level is further mediated by the context of the school. Again, at the meso level, there are a range of factors which, in some contexts, might facilitate change whereas in others these factors might become barriers to change.

TABLE 3: THEMES AT MESO LEVEL - FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority Support • Specific local government priorities • Building alliances with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum pressures • Perceptions of parents and local government members • Local community context and attitudes • Diminishing local authority resources and priorities in a context of economic restraint • Local authority catchment areas and private education
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Here different experiences at the meso level - the local authority context and the school’s community - indicated the significance of this level. Some of the case study headteachers found the meso level, the local authority’s (LA) aims and policy especially around poverty and disadvantage provided a legitimating set of policies and insights which allowed them to press for change, to address the learning needs of different groups of learners. As Ellen highlighted, the LA *“would have a huge role in that because that would be ... Council’s mantra in ensuring that the young people achieve the best they can and they move onto positive destinations... definitely something that is comfortable with the LA view”*. Beyond policy, LA support for the approaches being developed in school represented another significant facilitating factor. Sarah reported that it is recognised in her LA that their school does things differently from other schools but the Director of Education *“understands that we get results because we are doing it from the right stance”*, the school has been able to progress these. Where policy at macro level can legitimise the actions of social justice leaders, an absence of policy on social justice at meso level can cause tensions with a lack of understanding of LA Officers, and fellow headteachers. In these circumstances, as exemplified by Morag, headteachers become leaders of social justice at LA level articulating

these ideas and leading initiatives taken forward by the local cluster school communities.

Working with parents forms a central issue at the meso level, as highlighted by all of the headteachers. Again, there are facilitating and hindering factors in this nexus of relationships. Providing groups and individuals marginalised by society with a voice and a forum were key concerns for the headteachers. This could be through representation on Parent Councils or much wider activities or could include supporting lobbying for facilities and improvements to resources. The headteachers encouraged wider participation of parents from different locations in the catchment area, to perceive of themselves as part of the school. Hamish and Ellen reflected on the importance of working with the Parent Council to support the resourcing and development of the school. However, there is a question of the representative nature of these councils: Ellen noted that, *"the parent council generally tend to come from my more affluent parents. I have tried to deliberately recruit from ... to get more of a mix because [significant groups of pupils] are bussed here so that has different challenges for after school clubs and things like that"*. The headteachers pointed to a tension between supporting and being respectful of the different perspective of parents whilst at the same time acting on sets of values which would challenge the attitudes of some groups of parents.

Here there is a link between wider macro level cultural perceptions of 'good and bad kids'. Ellen recorded how she had to address negative attitudes held by some parents *"these are individual parents - I try and explain that this is [...] Council policy and this is how we operate within that and that policy is inclusion, restorative practice and we are working to ensure that people get along together in society, but I think they say, 'bring back the belt'"*. Challenging attitudes could be on broad issues of prejudice. For example, Hamish highlighted a *"lingering homophobia in very working class communities"* which had to be challenged. Challenging attitudes could also be in relation to what were perceived as more dominant issues. For example, Hamish pointed to the need to tackle limited aspirations and expectations as this effected the largest group disadvantaged and underachieving group in his school, where pupils from less affluent and poverty stricken backgrounds faced a cultural lack of aspiration: *"a poverty of expectation within quite a large number of the families with which we work"*. This aspect needed to be grappled with constantly and was perceived as demanding on headteachers. Thus, Hamish reflected: *'So when you end up having a meeting with parents and you try to talk their child up and they're talking their child down, I feel particularly, I find it very dispiriting'*. Therefore, culturally ingrained views from the parent body, about social justice issues per se and about setting limitations on the achievement of their own or others' children can present a major barrier in realising change. Here, the headteachers mediate a fine line, drawing support from the parent body by building alliances whilst presenting an alternative perspective to parents through a social justice leadership lens. However, as the headteachers must take care because to retain their circles of influence, the extent to which they can challenge is bounded.

The case study headteachers also pointed to the negative impact of limited resourcing in a period of financial constraint and this related not just to funding but to, firstly, reductions in services in the wider community for pupils experiencing difficulties and secondly, support from the local authority for the school. Ellen

highlighted the impact of the shrinkage in mental health services for young people: *"it's more the resources you can tap into outside so all public services have really shrunk so whereas before, there might have been a big network around to support young people, I think that network is shrinking in the amount of time, specialist input, that's not necessarily education"*. Hamish also pointed to the wider cuts in public service where he found his values and education policies conflicted with education policies: *"things like how the poorest paid employees in schools are treated, the poorest, they're given a really hard time because they don't have the backing of a professional organisation in the way that teachers do, I think that's appalling and [we should] complain, ... [as with] cutting librarians..."*.

There is a tension here between diminishing resources and the increased expectations about the achievement and attainment of all pupils. While headteachers recorded ways in which they looked to maximise the use of staff, they faced significant constraints. In Sarah's view more teachers are essential if further improvements in the school and across the education system are to be achieved. Regardless, all headteachers reported having to select areas for action because of limits on the staffing resource available. Thus, whilst Hamish identified range of areas to be addressed, such as developing confidence among girls there were *"so many other priorities in terms of actually just keeping the school going just now, in terms of the staff that we have, in terms of actually running a timetable, getting the school open day-to-day, I think it's really, really challenging just now, given the fact that we've lost a third of our management. It's not just a third of our deputies, it's also a third of what was our principal teachers"*. Reduced school budgets represented one aspect that created barriers to progressing a social justice agenda. Another aspect was the way in which funding was allocated within a LA in relation to specific initiatives designed to tackle disadvantage. Ellen reported that her school was in an economically mixed area and so was not involved in different schemes to support the attainment of young people living in poverty. Nevertheless, this school has significant numbers of young people living in poor circumstances, not able to access such programmes: *"we sometimes get overlooked in terms of any additionality for children who are not from such affluent backgrounds"*.

The other set of factors which some headteachers cited as hindering their work related to firstly, the construction of catchment areas which set schools up in competition with one another and secondly, the impact of private education on the school. Hamish highlighted the tension between the way catchment areas are currently constructed which created highly desirable schools serving advantaged and affluent communities. Raising the need for change to create truly comprehensive provision Hamish highlighted a tension between the policy rhetoric at macro level and the local political and social context: *"The policy discourse is aligned, it's all there, it's aligned but what's not aligned is that parental right to choose and political will to actually have proper comprehensive schools in the city ... [ironically] with a socially just Parliament."* Sarah also provided an example of the way in which historically the local context relating to private education and parents' aspirations for their children to attend a prestigious private secondary school, had had an impact on her school. In order to be accepted for one of the private secondaries, many parents transferred their children to private school for their final year of primary schooling. This had the effect of not only reducing

numbers in primary 7 but also creating a climate where there was limited expectations and ambition for those pupils who remained with the comprehensive school. Although there had been some reversal of this trend nevertheless this continued to pose a challenge in the school’s efforts towards the provision of an inclusive education for all.

There is an interaction between the macro and meso levels with the way in which policy is constructed in Scotland (Torrance & Forde, 2017) where headteachers must mediate between what English (2008) refers to as “critical externalities” and the school context. In Scottish education, the critical externalities where the policy intentions are set at both macro level and meso level are complex. The headteachers reflected on the context of the LAs and policy development – some of them playing an important role in contributing to policy development at this level. In some circumstances headteachers reported scope for determining the development of the school. The sense of being trusted by the LA even when practice in their schools was perceived as different from that in other schools was important. Thus, we see in these case studies that policy can be a useful tool to prompt change, meeting expectations in relation to social justice and equality but in working towards these goals the building of alliances is important. For two headteachers a long-standing relationship with their LAs officers was important to their role. These case studies also highlight the significance of the community which the school serves. While the headteachers recorded ways in which building alliances with parents provided a means to facilitate a social justice agenda, there was a need to balance understanding and appreciation of the position of parents with challenging attitudes and behaviours that detract from that agenda. If we look across the facilitating and hindering factors at both macro and meso level the headteacher’s ability to the challenge to policy and their scope for action is bounded. Ultimately there is still the demand for a degree of compliance with accountabilities for achieving the policy intentions being evident at both macro and meso levels. This tension is not simply about just meeting competing demands but instead signals a clash of core values, a tension evident also at the micro level.

MICRO LEVEL FACTORS

At the micro level, the pivotal position of school staff was consistently highlighted by the headteachers. On the one hand, staff were critical in taking forward work on social justice but on the other hand, staff could be the most significant barrier to change.

TABLE 3: THEMES AT MICRO LEVEL - FACILITATING AND HINDERING FACTORS.

Facilitating Factors	Hindering Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff supportive of and committed to social justice practices• Legacy of previous leadership culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff capacity, capability and limited world view

The commitment of staff evident in their readiness to participate in activities to support pupil attainment was an important facilitating factor highlighted by Ellen:

“our supported study budget isn’t as high ... we would always [have] lots of young people who would go to supported study or Easter revision but staff who do it ... don’t get paid. They still run supported study”. Morag indicated that having a sufficiently high proportion of staff supportive and committed to social justice practices was helpful in sustaining her work as a social justice leader. She believed in being collegiate and inclusive in her leadership approach and this required a willingness from staff to engage with her in the leadership and development of the school. In this way, she was able to be *“less planned and more spontaneous”* and was *“able to make more unconventional decisions”* than headteachers with a more top-down approach who focused on *“keeping it controlled”* in order to *“meet expectations and demands”*. For Sarah, the legacy of the previous leadership culture was used as leverage for change *“they needed some inspiration and they needed some fun and they needed to be less isolated”*. She recalled firstly, how she sought to foster and then secondly utilize this staff interest and commitment: *“a small number of highly committed outstanding teachers grabbed it and went with it and it just got so enthusiastic and they started talking in the staffroom”*. Similarly, Hamish recalled ways in which he built on any positive factor: *“align these things to set up systems where you support good staff delivering good lessons or good relationships. You’re not spending time justifying your approach or arguing your case because the case has been made. So, what you’re doing, is providing training, providing opportunities to staff to share their practice as opposed to dealing with change that people might not necessarily believe in.”*

The importance of staff attitudes, particularly their willingness to build social justice practice in the classroom, was perceived as vital in taking forward a vision of social justice in education. However, staff capacity and a limited world view posed significant barriers to pursuing a social justice agenda. Morag noted that having staff with a limited world view was extremely inhibiting of the practice of social justice leaders resulting in *“prejudice that works at a subtle level”*. Sarah also pointed to the impact of negative staff attitudes on pupils and on the whole culture of the school. There were issues with staff including support staff: *“in the playground they didn’t [treat] children with kindness and respect”* and tended to be very *“judgemental”*. Here there were real tensions between the values underpinning the vision for the school as an inclusive culture and subtle forms of prejudice evident in some relationships. Hamish expands on this, pointing to the centrality of the quality of provision in the classroom in achieving improved outcomes for all learners. *“The big thing that we have to change is pedagogy. Learning and teaching is simply not good enough. When you go into classes and you look at the attainment in a particular subject, you go and see the teacher and you see why the attainment is where it is. Teachers often then blame the kids and actually, it’s not the kids, it’s the quality of teaching, the quality of learning in the class”*.

One of the critical issues highlighted by the headteachers is the long term nature of leading a social justice agenda. At the heart of this process for these headteachers is changing minds across the school community: pupils and parents and particularly staff. Despite significant changes in the school since his appointment as headteacher, Hamish points to his own impatience: *One of the things I’ve been most frustrated about is, yes, we have improved the behaviour,*

we do have a clear, collective vision, we have clear values but actually what we haven't changed anywhere near enough is the quality of learning in classrooms." This is a long slow process requiring considerable 'political acumen' (Ryan, 2010) that continues day-by-day in the school as we can see in Morag's reflection: *How do we close the gap? You know, I've been trying to do that all my life and made no progress. But actually, by going down and looking at this small level I think there is something in that and I think I've found that in the past, before actually, when I was doing raising attainment in '98 in [a school in a deprived area] that when you get down to it and you get into the nitty gritty and find out what's going on for individuals, you can make impact, you can make that impact on a small level and it kind of mushrooms and then it impacts the bigger level".*

Headteachers within the micro level build on their influence through recognised authority and while there is an urgency in seeking socially just practice, there is a balance to be struck between not acting too quickly or boldly to undermine that authority and building up alliances to press for change and determine the focus for that change. There were limitations to what the headteachers could address and if these headteachers overreached and did not realise achievable change, then their social justice leadership perspective and practice was likely to fail. Playing for continuous gradual gains was key, where there was much more certainty of successful outcomes even though inevitably it took longer to bring about change. Here headteachers engaged in a range of practices to realise change in classroom practice such as scaffolding the professional learning of staff to come to their own informed view of which aspects of social justice needed to be addressed and how their classroom practice might be reshaped and engaging with staff in the exploration of values and practice. There is an understanding that the staff are learning and so as with any good teacher, the headteachers scaffold and support that learning, building knowledge and understanding and an appreciation of the changed expectations for the role of teachers.

CONCLUSIONS

Cochran-Smith (2010: 447) in looking at the development of teacher education for social justice, argues that: "teaching and teacher education are inescapably political and ideological activities in that they inherently involve ideas, ideals, power, and access to learning and life opportunities". These case studies indicate that social justice leadership is also inherently political as it is about the exercise of power to influence others to bring about change. Within these change processes there are significant tensions. This is not the simple tension highlighted in change management literature as 'resistance' which leaders must overcome but is about using social justice as a core value to bring about fundamental change in the conditions of learning for diverse groups of learners in the school. To realise this change these headteachers have to tackle barriers to change and build on facilitating factors at each level. However, their work as social justice leaders is bounded.

Headteachers mediate the policy context at the macro level, the policy context and employers' expectations at the meso level; the school community and internal stakeholders at the micro level. This is all through negotiation powered by an informed perspective. Each headteacher, as an individual, often has had to defend their stance. They build alliances to draw support and conveyed authority

as well as identifying targeted areas to address. The case study headteachers were aware that the policy emphasis was predominantly on poverty and social class with funding allocated on the basis of 'closing the gap'. They looked to the more fundamental task of ensuring access to education to address the needs of diverse groups of learners. However, the dominance of the attainment agenda shapes not only policy but the scope for action. The attainment gap is a blunt instrument in the task of addressing the underperformance of pupils in poverty with regard to attainment as it does not fully take into account the different experiences of marginalisation, prejudice and discrimination that shape the learning lives of diverse groups of learners. Theoharris (2010), in his study of headteachers who were successful in building a socially just school, found that attainment was not the focus of these headteachers' activities. Instead they worked to reshape of the culture and structures of the school to secure the conditions of learning for diverse groups of learners. The headteachers in the Scottish case studies reflected on the limitations of the policy drive to improve the attainment of specific groups of learners rather than a broader based understanding of the significance of other social factors such as ethnicity, gender, faith, sexual orientation and disability and the intersection of these factors. On the one hand, these headteachers are targeting arguably the largest groups of pupils where poverty creates the greatest barrier to achievement but, on the other hand, when they do this they are aligning themselves with endorsed policy rhetoric. However, further interrogation of the attainment statistics could highlight the performance of different minority groups of learners. Masking social injustices that we are not yet ready to acknowledge and act upon and even in terms of poverty, places the responsibility of closing the gap squarely with headteachers. Although any additional funding in education is to be welcomed, the current policy focus creates a means of avoiding wider societal issues related to exclusion and marginalisation of different groups and responsibilities about the distribution of wealth and society's responsibilities to all in Scotland to play a full and active role - statements made more than 30 years ago in the first national document to articulate a set of values for education, *Values in Education* (SCCC, 1991). It is time for a wider debate in Scotland about the implications of having 'justice' as a core value on the mace of the Scottish Parliament and as central themes in educational policy and in the professional standards.

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